

# DHS Matters!

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## Michigan Department of Human Services

### *New day dawns for public assistance in Michigan*

Our department became Michigan Department of Human Services March 15 with a new name and new goals. Here's what we can look forward to in the coming months in our new agency:

- A new logo (not yet selected), new assistance application (now being tested in selected counties) and new names for a couple job classifications (not officially announced yet).
- Continuing emphasis in cash assistance programming to help reduce poverty. DHS will seek legislation to allow more education options through the Work First program.
- Expand a program of caseworkers located in manufacturing facilities modeled after Cascade Engineering near Grand Rapids. DHS director Udow said DHS is looking at sites in Detroit and Traverse City for additional pilots.
- Continuing emphasis on early childhood initiatives. The new Early Childhood Investment Corporation will contract with intermediate school districts to coordinate early childhood programs around the state.
- Upgraded standards for child care programs and a tiered rating system for the programs so parents will have a better gauge of the quality of a program. New licensing standards will include training requirements for child care workers.
- Expansion of school-based Family Resource Centers with 10 new centers this year.
- Emphasis on reducing caseloads and the "Bridges" technology replacement program.
- Expansion of the Family to Family foster care initiative and address the disproportionate number of minority children in the child welfare system.

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## Macomb County Mt. Clemens District Black History Month celebration

From Yvonne Brock, Program Section Manager  
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February was Black History Month and during the month our district had a month-long celebration of the rich history and contributions from black Americans. Dr. Carter G. Woodson, who is known as the father of black history, wrote, "Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history." Woodson came from modest beginnings as his parents were former slaves. But he had a vision and he worked hard, completed college and finished his formal education with a Ph.D. in history from Harvard University.



George Shirley, pictured above, spoke at Macomb County Mt. Clemens District's Black History Month celebration in February. Shirley is a Wayne State University graduate and was the first black member of the U.S. Army Chorus.

Our district wanted to reinforce his vision and share information on the many contributions of black Americans. Our goal was to highlight and share information on education, finance & preserving the family unit, health and maintaining family ties. We began our celebration with displays around the office. We show cased cultural items, books, articles on famous black Americans and Web sites with historical information and learning activities.

George Shirley, a graduate of Wayne State University and a nationally known performer, teacher and lecturer, made a presentation Feb. 23 on his life experiences. Shirley spoke on his experiences beginning with his service as the first African American member of the U.S. Army Chorus in Washington D.C. and culminating with his performing as a tenor with the Metropolitan Opera. He currently teaches at the University of Michigan where he continues to share his love of music. He finished his presentation reminding us how important it is that we are helping families. But the absolute highlight was that he treated us to a solo that inspired and captivated the group. It is wonderful that he had a vision and as he might say took a chance at being an opera singer.

Other events included a demonstration on how to do an African head wrap by one of our talented staff and ending the month with our "Taste Fest", a delicious feast with traditional and exotic dishes prepared by the wonderful cooks of the Mt. Clemens District. During our feast we were treated to the melodic sounds of talented Black musicians past and present.

A special group of staff had a vision and worked diligently to make the month long celebration a success. The committee members are [Angela Cusmano](#), [Vivian Ford](#) and [Gloria Grabel](#). [Kathy Grimes](#), [Robin Grimes](#), [Mona Lindsay](#) and [Mary Russell](#). They deserve special kudos for generously giving of their time and energy, continuing the vision of Dr. Woodson. Black History Month is a reminder that learning is lifelong and to share our knowledge with someone you know.

### Office of Child Support adds units

From Maria Candy  
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The Office of Child Support transitioned two units from contract employment to state employment Jan. 31. The Special Initiatives Unit and the Central Enforcement Unit have been in existence since 2001 and are two-thirds of the Central Operations Division, which also includes the Central Functions Unit. However, unlike the state staffed Central Functions Unit, they had been staffed by vendor contracts.

The Special Initiatives Unit has three roles: central customer service, often researching complex issues for customers; as contact between Office of Child Support and the Governor's Office, responding to constituent requests from legislators; and as Central Table Administrators for employers and insurance carriers in the Michigan Child Support Enforcement System. The Central Enforcement Unit places liens and levies on financial accounts to collect child support arrearages. In FY 2004 the unit collected over \$16 million for Michigan families.

The interviewing process for these important positions was open to all applicants. As a result, Over 400 applications were received to fill the 39 positions. After the screening process was concluded, more than 150 of those applicants received interviews. Among the 39 positions filled, there were two departmental managers, four departmental analysts, 29 departmental technicians, and two general office assistants. For additional information on child support central operations please contact [Ron Snead](#) at (517) 335-7794 or [SneadR@michigan.gov](mailto:SneadR@michigan.gov)

## Local group's donation to assist Washtenaw County kids

From Susan Reynolds Bunton

Washtenaw County DHS

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A local organization donated more than 35 back packs/duffel bags full of toiletries and other items for youths to Washtenaw County DHS. The packs/duffel will be donated to children that come into care and for the youth board being established under the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.

The donated items were collected and donated to DHS from the Jack and Jill of America, Inc. Ypsilanti Chapter. The local chapter contacted me, in my role as Family to Family coordinator and representative for the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative, for recommendations on community service suggestions. We were very pleased to accept their donation.

Their programming activities are guided under a national theme to address and help alleviate disturbing community problems that affect children. Their goals are very much in line with some of the goals of our Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative and Family to Family. We hope there will be more collaboration in the future with Jack and Jill.

Jack and Jill of America is a family organization providing cultural, social, civic and recreational activities that stimulate and expand the mind to enhance life. Some of their goals include:

- Creating a medium of contact for children that will stimulate their growth and development.
- Providing constructive educational, cultural, civic, recreational, social and service programs for children.
- Aiding mothers in learning more about their children to seek the same advantages for all children.
- Supporting all national legislation aimed at bettering conditions for all children.

For more information on Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative visit their Web site at [www.jimcaseyyouth.org](http://www.jimcaseyyouth.org)

## Grateful giving from Department of Human Services staff around Mich.

### Van Buren County

Van Buren County DHS has been participating in biweekly "Casual for a Cause" days for approximately four years. Every other Wednesday is "casual day." Staff members pay \$5 to participate and we collect about \$200 per month. On a regular basis, funds collected are used to keep a food pantry stocked for customers who need a helping hand to get them through a short period of time. Also, since that time, Van Buren has been able to make contributions to very worthwhile causes, the first being \$1,000 to 9/11 Disaster Relief and, most recently, \$1,000 to the Red Cross Tsunami Relief Fund in January.

— *From Connie Huston*

### Wayne County DHS Greydale District

Staff at the Greydale District in Wayne County recently raised \$340 in a one-day dress down event for charity. The money was forwarded to the American Red Cross to assist in the Tsunami Relief Fund. Greydale staff participated in numerous charitable events in the pass including a "Gather and Give" clothing drive for clients and participation in "Helping Hands" an effort designed to buy toys, books, clothing and other gifts for foster care children.

— *From Kaye Smith-Clay*



## DHS Hollywood connection?

From Clyde Edwards

Genesee County DHS

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Early this year, through the efforts of parents Clyde and Corinne Edwards of Genesee County, Chase Edwards (age 10) was invited to participate in Hollywood auditions. Clyde is a juvenile justice specialist with Genesee County Department of Human Services.



During January & February we made arrangements and set up opportunities that landed Chase admission to the prestigious Oakwood Apartment Complex "Home to the Child Actor Program" and in the heart of Universal City Studios, Warner Brothers Studios and NBC Studios.

As a result of this six-week adventure we were one of three families selected from 150 families to be part of an ABC Primetime Live Special on "Hollywood Kids Following Their Dream." The special will air on ABC in April 2005.



## Child support employee receives special certification

From Chris Bayley, Communications Chair  
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The Greater Lansing Chapter of the Association of Government Accountants (AGA) is pleased to announce that [Christy Ryan](#) – an employee in the DHS Office of Child Support – recently passed examinations to be named a Certified Government Financial Manager.

Distinguished by academic achievement and experience in government financial management, the CGFM designation has become the standard by which government measures financial management professionals. More than 13,300 individuals have achieved this distinct certification, which was established in 1994.

The rigorous certification process requires that each candidate pass three separate examinations. The exams cover governmental environment, governmental accounting, financial reporting and budgeting, and governmental financial management and control. Ms. Ryan is a member of the AGA Greater Lansing chapter.

The Association of Government Accountants is a 17,000-member professional organization devoted to meeting the continuing professional education needs of financial managers at all levels of government, the private sector and academia.

For more information about the association or the CGFM program call 800-AGA-7211 or visit AGA's Web site at [www.agacgfm.org](http://www.agacgfm.org)

## Sunset on the FIA

The Family Independence Agency was created by state legislation in 1995 and became effective in March 1996, replacing the Michigan Department of Social Services. Here are 10 things we'll remember that grew out of the agency's 10-year history:

- Welfare reform and unprecedented efforts to move people from cash assistance to the workforce.
- Starting and participating in the Work First system.
- The TANF grant replacing the entitlement to cash assistance known as AFDC.
- New efforts to reduce teen pregnancy and reduce the number of teen parents on welfare.
- A staggering increase in the number of low-income families receiving child care subsidies.
- Implementation of the five-tier children's protective services system.
- Saying hello to Michigan Commission for the Blind and Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns when they arrived in 1996, and goodbye to them when they departed in 2003.
- Saying goodbye to our licensing unit, the Bureau of Regulatory Services, in 1996; then saying hello when they returned as the Office of Children and Adult Licensing in 2003.
- Putting the Michigan Child Support Enforcement System into statewide service after years of trying.
- Changes in juvenile justice including big changes at the W.J. Maxey and Adrian training schools and putting the balanced and restorative justice philosophy into practice.

**DHS Matters!** is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services  
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